

IN THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) An image forming apparatus, comprising:

~~a plurality of imaging units;~~

a loading unit ~~formed~~ forming at least a portion of ~~on a top face of a main body of the~~
image forming apparatus;

a discharging unit disposed on the top face of the image forming apparatus ~~at an~~
~~operation side of the main body~~, wherein ~~an image-formed recording media are~~ medium is
discharged through the discharging unit ~~to~~ onto the loading unit; and

a plurality of developer containing members disposed in the image forming apparatus
under the loading unit ~~main body~~, the developer containing members being arranged in a
direction extending from ~~the~~ an operation side of the image forming apparatus ~~main body~~, and
the developer containing members configured to provide ~~providing the~~ corresponding imaging
units with developer;

wherein

the developer containing members are detachable from the ~~main body of the image~~
forming apparatus, and each developer containing member can be handled in ~~within~~ a space
above the image forming apparatus without changing an orientation thereof;

the more distant the developer containing member is from the discharging unit, the
higher the developer containing member is disposed; and

the loading unit can be opened around a rotative center unit disposed at a position
beyond the developer containing members from the operation side of the image forming
apparatus.

2. (Canceled)

4. (Currently Amended) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim [[3]]1,
wherein

the rotative center unit is disposed at a position lower than a highest portion of the developer containing member that is most distant from the discharging unit.

5. (Currently Amended) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim [[3]]1,
wherein

the rotative center unit includes an axle unit provided in the main body, the axis of the axle unit being in width directions of the main body, and a bearing unit provided in the loading unit, the bearing unit being supported by the axle unit.

6. (Currently Amended) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim [[3]]1,
wherein

the loading unit can be opened in directions extending from and approaching to the operation side.

7. (Currently Amended) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim [[3]]1,
further comprising:

an operations panel disposed on a facing of the main body positioned at the operation side of the image forming apparatus;

wherein

the loading unit can be rotatively opened to a position higher than the facing on which the operations panel is disposed.

the loading unit can be rotatively opened to a position higher than the facing on which the operations panel is disposed.

8. (Original) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 7,

wherein

a highest portion of the loading unit is as high as a highest portion of the facing on which the operations panel is disposed.

9. (Original) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein

a lowest portion of the loading unit is lower than a highest portion of the developer containing member disposed at a lowest position.

10. (Original) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 1, further comprising:

a paper feeding cassette detachably provided in the main body, the paper feeding cassette storing a recording medium on which an image is to be formed.

11. (Original) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 10,

wherein the paper feeding cassette can be attached to and detached from the main body in directions extending from and approaching to the operation side of the main body.

12. (Original) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 1, further comprising:

an openable tray provided on the main body, on which a recording medium can be stacked;

wherein

the loading unit and the openable tray can be opened within a range of a width of the main body.

13. (Original) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 12, wherein the openable tray can be opened backward from the operation side.

14. (Original) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein the loading unit is a portion of a facing of the main body covering the developer containers.

15. (Original) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein the loading unit extends from an end unit under the discharging unit to a direction extending from the discharging unit, and has a plurality of ribs protruding upward thereon.

16. (Original) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 15, wherein the manner in which the ribs are disposed is substantially spoke-wise from a center at an end unit side of the loading unit.

17. (Original) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 15, wherein the quantity of the ribs is three.

18. (Original) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 1,

wherein

a plurality of curves protruding upward is formed on a surface of the loading unit in width directions.

19. (Original) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 1,

wherein

the surface of the loading unit is slanted in a substantially same manner as the developer storage members are slanted.

20. (Original) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 1,

wherein

the imaging units are disposed at a slant in the same direction as the developer containing members; and

a surface of the loading unit is formed at a slant in the same direction as the imaging units.

21. (Original) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 1, further comprising:

an intermediate transfer unit disposed at a slant substantially in the same direction as the developer containing members;

wherein

an image formed by the imaging units is transferred to the intermediate transfer unit, and

a surface of the loading unit is formed at a slant in the same direction as the intermediate transfer unit.

22. (Original) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 1, further comprising:
an optical writing unit disposed at a slant in the same direction as the developer containing members, which optical writing unit writes an image on each image retaining unit using a light beam;

wherein

a surface of the loading unit is formed at a slant in the same direction as the optical writing unit.

23. (Original) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 1, further comprising:
an optical writing unit that writes an image on an image retaining unit using a light beam; and

an intermediate transfer unit to which the image formed by the imaging unit is transferred;

wherein

the imaging unit, the optical writing unit, the intermediate transfer unit, and a surface of the loading unit are provided at a slant substantially in the same direction as the developer containing members.

24. (Original) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 1,
wherein
the space required for handling the developer containing members is limited to width of the main body, the width being perpendicular to directions in which the image-formed recording medium is discharged through the discharging unit

25. (Currently Amended) An image forming apparatus, comprising:

~~a plurality of imaging units;~~

~~a loading unit formed on~~forming at least a portion of a top face of ~~a main body of the~~
image forming apparatus;

a discharging unit disposed at on the top face of the image forming apparatus~~an~~
~~operation side of the main body~~, wherein ~~an image-formed recording media are~~medium is
discharged through the discharging unit ~~onto~~to the loading unit; and

a plurality of developer containing members disposed in the image forming apparatus
under the loading unit~~main body~~, the developer containing members being arranged in a
direction extending from ~~the~~an operation side of the image forming apparatus~~main body~~, and
the developer containing members being configured to provide~~providing the~~ corresponding
imaging units with developer;

wherein

the developer containing member closest to the discharging unit is disposed at a lower
position than the developer containing member most distant from the discharging unit; and

the loading unit can be opened around a rotative center unit disposed at a position
beyond the developer containing members from the operation side of the image forming
apparatus.

26. (Original) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 25,

wherein

the discharging unit is disposed at a higher position than the position at which the
developer containing member closest to the discharging unit is disposed, and at a lower
position than the position at which the developer containing member most distant from the
discharging unit is disposed.

27. (Original) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 25,
wherein
the loading unit is configured in a manner in which a lowest portion thereof is lower
than a discharging point of the discharging unit.

28. (Original) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 25, further
comprising:

an operations panel disposed on a facing of the main body positioned at the operation
side of the image forming apparatus;

wherein
the loading unit is configured in a manner in which a highest portion thereof is
substantially as high as the facing on which the operations panel is disposed.

29. (Original) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 25,
wherein
the loading unit is configured in a manner in which a lowest portion thereof is
disposed at a lower position than a position at which a highest portion of a lowest one of the
developer containing members is disposed.

30. (Original) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 25,
wherein
the loading unit is a portion of a facing of the main body, the portion covering the
developer containing members.

31. (Original) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 25,

wherein

the loading unit extends from an end unit positioned below the discharging unit in a direction extending from the discharging unit; and

a plurality of ribs are provided on the loading unit, the ribs protruding upward from a surface of the loading unit.

32. (Original) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 31,

wherein

the ribs are disposed substantially spoke-wise from a center at a side of the end unit of the loading unit.

33. (Original) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 31,

wherein the quantity of the ribs is three.

34. (Original) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 25,

wherein

a plurality of curves protruding upward is formed on a surface of the loading unit in directions perpendicular to a direction in which a recording medium is discharged from the discharging unit.

35. (Original) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 25,

wherein

the loading unit is configured in a manner in which a surface thereof is slanted in the same direction as the direction in which the developer containing members are arranged.

36. (Original) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 25,
wherein
the imaging units are disposed at a slant substantially in the same direction in which
the developer containing members are disposed; and
a surface of the loading unit is disposed at a slant substantially in the same direction in
which the imaging units are disposed.

37. (Original) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 25, further
comprising:
an intermediate transfer unit disposed at a slant substantially in the same direction as,
the developer containing members;
wherein
an image formed by the imaging units is transferred to the intermediate transfer unit,
and
a surface of the loading unit is formed at a slant in the same direction as the
intermediate transfer unit.

38. (Original) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 25, further
comprising:
an optical writing unit disposed at a slant in the same direction as the developer
containing members, which optical writing unit writes an image on each image retaining unit
using a light beam;
wherein
a surface of the loading unit is formed at a slant in the same direction as the optical
writing unit.

39. (Original) The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 25, further comprising:

an optical writing unit that writes an image on an image retaining unit using a light beam; and

an intermediate transfer unit to which the image formed by the imaging unit is transferred;

wherein

the imaging unit, the optical writing unit, the intermediate transfer unit, and a surface of the loading unit are provided at a slant substantially in the same direction as the developer containing members.

40. (New) An image forming apparatus having an operation panel on a first side, the image forming apparatus comprising:

a loading unit disposed on at least a portion of a top face of the image forming apparatus;

a discharging unit disposed on the top face of the image forming apparatus, the discharging unit being configured to discharge image-formed recording media onto the loading unit; and

a plurality of developer containing members configured to provide corresponding imaging units with developer, the plurality of developer containing members being disposed under the loading unit such that the more distant a developer containing member in the plurality is from the discharging unit in a substantially horizontal direction, the higher the developer containing member is disposed in the image forming apparatus in a substantially vertical direction,

wherein each of the developer containing members is detachable from the image forming apparatus and is configured to be handled within a space above the image forming apparatus without changing an orientation thereof, and the loading unit is configured to be rotationally opened around an axis horizontally located beyond the developer containing members with respect to the operation panel on the first side of the image forming apparatus.